

THE SCHOOL LUNCH INITIATIVE



Frequently Asked Questions May 2006

What is the School Lunch Initiative (SLI)?

SLI makes a connection between public education and public health by emphasizing the relationships among food, diet, physical activity, health, and the environment. SLI is a system-wide effort in the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD), grounded in the District's mission and the community's commitment, to promote the health, well-being and academic achievement of its entire diverse student population.

What are the specific goals of SLI?

SLI is an effort to put into effect many of the elements of the BUSD Food Policy adopted in 1999. As part of SLI, BUSD and its partners will:

- Provide delicious, healthy, freshly prepared meals using local, seasonal ingredients from sustainable farms to all of Berkeley's public school students.
- Link learning opportunities in kitchen classrooms, instructional gardens and dining rooms with academic and physical education programs.
- Integrate curriculum across academic content areas to provide students with a broad understanding of the complexity of the relationships among food, culture, health and the environment.
- Renovate kitchens and cafeterias to accommodate on-site meal preparation; reduce packaging and waste; support recycling and composting; and enhance the dining experience.
- Collaborate with and educate community members, community groups and agencies.
- Provide technical assistance and professional development to BUSD staff.
- Evaluate our successes and document our lessons learned.

How is SLI funded?

SLI is a public/private partnership. Funding for the meal program in part comes from state and federal reimbursements, as well as revenues from the lunch program. The voters in Berkeley passed a bond in 2000 to support kitchen and building renovations. The Center for Ecoliteracy (CEL) and Chez Panisse Foundation (CPF) are working in collaboration with BUSD to raise the additional funding necessary to fully implement SLI.

How is the Center for Ecoliteracy (CEL) involved?

CEL provides both resources and professional development opportunities for teachers to implement SLI. CEL has developed a planning framework and online guide for a national audience called *Rethinking School Lunch* to support district-wide systems change and curriculum integration. In addition, CEL is funding curriculum and professional development consultants to work with teams of educators district-wide on the practical aspects of integrating food systems and nutrition literacy themes into the core curriculum.

How is the Chez Panisse Foundation (CPF) involved?

CPF is supporting SLI by funding the Director of Nutrition Services position through a three-year food service innovations grant to BUSD. In addition, CPF is sponsoring an effort at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School to link educational opportunities in the lunch program to the classroom and The Edible Schoolyard garden and kitchen programs. BUSD has allocated the necessary funds to complete the Dining Commons and CPF is securing additional resources to equip the facility and ensure that it is a beautiful place for students to eat. The Dining Commons will serve as a teaching kitchen for King School and as a central kitchen for all of the middle schools. The building is scheduled to open in the fall of 2007.

What changes in the meal program should we expect to see in schools this year and next?

Changes are occurring at each school throughout the district. The character and degree of change varies according to school-site readiness, infrastructure, professional development, and stage of implementation. We have already started to:

- Serve fresh fruits and vegetables at every meal in every elementary school;
- Provide locally produced, fresh and healthy pizzas and Mexican food;
- Phase-out all processed foods in all schools;
- Introduce organic salad bars and grass-fed beef hot dogs and hamburgers at the high school;
- Switch to hormone-free milk throughout the District and replace milk cartons at the high school with a dispenser to reduce waste;
- Remove trans fats and high fructose corn syrup from all school meals;
- Procure fresh fruits and vegetables seasonally and regionally;
- Develop plans to remodel existing food-service facilities district-wide;
- Install salad bars at all school sites.

How is BUSD planning on renovating existing facilities to accommodate freshly prepared meals?

In 2000, Berkeley voters passed a \$10 million school bond measure to build a cafeteria at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School and renovate kitchens district-wide. About half of the schools currently have kitchens to accommodate on-site meal production. BUSD is currently working on an assessment of school kitchen facilities that will be presented to the Board of Education early next year, along with a timeline for future renovations. BUSD plans to renovate all of the existing kitchens over the next five years to accommodate greater on-site meal production.

How does BUSD decide what kind of food will be served?

BUSD strives to create a set of menus and meals that are healthy, seasonal, delicious, and reflective of the ethnic diversity of the community as a whole (including culturally appropriate vegetarian and vegan meals). BUSD works within budget constraints and tries to balance student

preferences and tastes with the nutritional standards set by the state and federal government. To the greatest extent possible, BUSD will use ingredients from local, sustainable farms.

How can we give feedback on the meal program?

Each week the Director of Nutrition Services meets with food service staff to get informal feedback from the schools. Community members, parents, students and staff are encouraged to give their opinions on school meals to food service staff and/or contact the Director of Nutrition Services directly. BUSD also conducts student tastings to allow students at different schools to sample new menu items.

Will food service at all district schools be the same?

By the end of 2007, the high school, middle schools and elementary schools will have different monthly menus. Where possible, the program will tailor menus to preferences specific to each school.

How is Universal Breakfast (UB) related to this effort? What is BUSD serving as part of the UB program?

The goal of UB is to bring a healthy and equitable start to the school day for all students. UB is part of SLI's effort to provide freshly prepared meals to all students and includes a rotating menu of organic cereals, hormone- and antibiotic-free milk and yogurt, natural juices, and a variety of high-protein baked items. UB began as a pilot in 2005 and BUSD plans to implement it in some schools by the end of 2006. BUSD plans to phase in the implementation of UB into all elementary schools by 2008.

How can teachers integrate the School Lunch Initiative into their curriculum and classroom practices?

Through this district-wide effort, teachers are encouraged and supported in finding ways to increase their students' science and nutrition literacy. Working with strand maps from the American Association for the Advancement of Science's (AAAS) Project 2061 *Atlas of Science Literacy* and California state standards, the Center for Ecoliteracy has developed a K-8 scope and sequence called *Linking Food, Culture, Health, and the Environment*. CEL, working in partnership with the School Lunch Initiative, selected five strands: *Plants Making Food, Food Webs, Diet and Exercise, Producing Food, and Learning from Others* and is developing grade-level matrices, mapping CA standards in science, history/social science, health, language arts, and math. These matrices will be available in summer 2006. In addition, CEL has developed *Rethinking School Lunch—A Visual Guide to Linking Food, Culture, and the Environment* for general audiences that depicts dimensions of an integrated curriculum. The visual guide will be available in Spring 2006. CEL and BUSD are providing ongoing professional development for teams of educators from participating K-8 schools and is offering a summer institute as well.

How do the kitchen/garden programs in the schools relate to SLI?

Through SLI, BUSD will make stronger connections between the curriculum used in the kitchen and garden classrooms and the meals that are being served to students in the cafeteria. The majority of kitchen/garden programs in Berkeley are funded through the California Nutrition Network (CNN). These programs have been using, among other materials, a Harvest of the

Month curriculum. As part of SLI, BUSD hopes to create stronger connections between Harvest of the Month and the core curriculum.

How is The Edible Schoolyard (ESY) related to SLI?

ESY is a garden and kitchen classroom program located at Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School and serves as a model kitchen/garden program for the district and the nation. There are many other excellent kitchen/garden programs in Berkeley's public schools. As part of SLI, BUSD hopes to create a kitchen/garden program at any school where there is none, and to strengthen all of its existing kitchen/garden programs.

Can SLI be implemented in other communities?

SLI in Berkeley is designed to be replicable. It represents a comprehensive and flexible program of integrated health and learning and contains models worthy of study and emulation by school districts with the aim of improving student wellness and academic achievement. The *Rethinking School Lunch* K – 8 scope and sequence curriculum framework being developed by CEL, articulates both Project 2061 science literacy benchmarks and CA state standards. The framework can be adapted to meet standards in other states.

Current changes in the school district meal program are being accomplished within the financial and policy parameters of the National School Lunch Program and existing district funding streams. SLI is developing a new set of menus and recipes, and operational plans that will lead to increases in the amount of fresh, whole ingredients procured from local and sustainable farms each year. A suite of menus and recipes developed by the project will be published on the SLI website so that other districts with similar plans and fewer resources will be able to take advantage of this ambitious body of work at no cost to their districts. Suggestions for adaptations to variations in seasonal produce availability in other states will also be included. In addition, SLI is developing guidelines for a new procurement system, and a new way of thinking about procurement for school districts, that we believe other districts will benefit from in the future.

What can individuals, organizations, or districts do as a first step?

The federal government has issued a mandate, through the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, which provides that all school districts must develop wellness policies that establish standards for diet and health in our nation's schools by June 2006. The mandate makes clear that parents, community members, and others concerned with the health and well-being of school-age children are to be involved in the process. These district-based wellness policies will go into effect at the beginning of the 2006/07 school year and will collectively begin to influence the health and well-being of all American school-age children.

The *Rethinking School Lunch* framework includes a Model Wellness Policy Guide for schools, developed by CEL with Chez Panisse Foundation and Slow Food USA. The Guide is inspired by the work of the Child Nutrition Advisory Council (CNAC) of the Berkeley Unified School District. That working group, a forerunner of the wellness committee, drafted and supported to adoption the first school district wellness policy of its kind in the nation in August of 1999. Their inspirational language is an integrator throughout the Guide that ensures that the intention in adopting the policy, and the policy itself, remain connected. The Guide provides language, instructions, and recommendations for drafting district wellness policies that place health and

learning at the center of the academic curriculum and encourages institutional change. The wellness policy development process can be an important starting place for discussions within communities about what wellness is and how it is to be achieved. Individuals, organizations and districts are encouraged to develop wellness policies that set high standards for health and learning.

How will changes in the meal program and other efforts related to the School Lunch Initiative be communicated?

BUSD, in collaboration with CEL and CPF, is developing an outreach and communications effort to help communicate to parents, teachers and students the changes that are taking place. SLI partners have created a website that will provide detailed information and updates about SLI for teachers, students and the community. [www.school lunchinitiative.org]

How will SLI be evaluated?

CPF is raising funds to work with UC Berkeley Center for Weight and Health (CWH) on the first phase of an SLI evaluation. CWH will develop both a process and outcomes evaluation of SLI. Data collection may include student and parent surveys and other methods approved by the Board of Education. SLI partners hope to collect baseline data in Fall 2006.

In addition, CEL and the Children’s Hospital Oakland Research Institute (CHORI) are currently seeking funds to conduct a study that would look at the dietary impact of SLI on health and behavior. This level of analysis is more comprehensive than standard food intervention evaluations and will provide the school and community critical data directly correlated to the impact of changes in diet on chronic conditions such as obesity and diabetes. As funds become available, other research projects may be developed to evaluate SLI in partnership with BUSD.

For additional information:

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